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ABSTRACT

By late winter 1933, the United States had already endured more than 3 years of economic depression. During the previous summer, the Democratic Party platform had unveiled a generalized plan for economic recovery. President Franklin D. Roosevelt set about to prepare the nation to accept expansion of federal power since he recognized that the programs he was about to introduce for congressional legislative action to relieve the dire effects of the Great Depression were unprecedented in peacetime. In his 1933 inaugural address, President Roosevelt recommended extreme measures. This lesson relates to the duties and powers of the President and Congress as set forth in the Preamble, in Article I, Section 8, Paragraph 18, and in Article II, Section 3, Paragraph 1, that resulted in measures to provide for national relief from the economic disaster of the Great Depression. The primary sources for the lesson are six informative photographs of the era and President Roosevelt's inaugural address. The lesson correlates to the National History Standards and to the National Standards for Civics and Government. It presents historical background on the Great Depression, the catalyst for President Roosevelt's speech (two resources), and suggests diverse teaching activities for classroom implementation, including vocabulary development, document analysis, group research project, group document analysis, essay writing, Internet research, and class discussion. (BT)

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National Archives and Records Administration

THE CONSTITUTION COMMUNITY

The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)

FDR's First Inaugural Address: Declaring "War" on the Great Depression

By John M. Lawlor, Jr.

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http://www.nara.gov/education/classrm.html

2000

The Constitution Community is a partnership between classroom teachers and education specialists from the National Archives and Records Administration. We are developing lessons and activities that address constitutional issues, correlate to national academic standards, and encourage the analysis of primary source documents. The lessons that have been developed are arranged according to historical era..

SO033597

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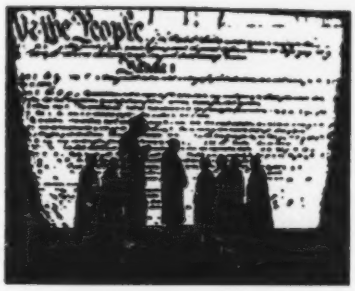
FDR's First Inaugural Address: Declaring "War" on the Great Depression

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
Washington, D. C.
March 4, 1933



Constitutional Connection

This lesson relates to the duties and powers of the president and Congress as set forth in the Preamble , in Article I, Section 8, Paragraph 18 , and in Article II, Section 3, Paragraph 1 , that resulted in measures to provide for national relief from the economic disaster of the Great Depression .

This lesson correlates to the National History Standards.

Era 8 -The Great Depression and World War II (1929 - 1945)

- **Standard 2A** -Demonstrate an understanding of the New Deal and the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

This lesson correlates to the National Standards for Civics and Government.

Standard III.B.1. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding the purposes, organization, and functions of the institutions of the national government.

Cross-curricular Connections

Share this exercise with your history, art, language arts, and government colleagues.

List of Documents

1. Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933.
(page 1) (page 2) (page 3) (page 4) (page 5) (page 6) (page 7) (page 8) (page 9)

2. "Sgt. Burke, of the U.S. Army, talking to a group of boys just arrived from New York as replacements for CCC Camp, TVA #22, near Esco, Tennessee, telling them the rules of the camp before they go to their lunch. Behind the boys are some of the tents in which they are living, pending the completion of the barracks which will be their winter quarters. The iron cones behind the two boys at the left of the picture are heating stoves for the tents."

3. "CCC Boys at work," Prince George County, Virginia.

4. Works Progress Administration (WPA) sewing shop at 475 Tenth Avenue, New York City.

5. Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) camps for unemployed women in Arcola, Pennsylvania "Reunion Day First Campers Join Second Campers."

6. Farm Security Administration-Works Progress Administration: Unemployed men eating in Volunteers of America soup kitchen in Washington, D.C.

7. Rural Electrification Administration (REA) - Tennessee Valley Administration (TVA): "Stringing rural TVA transmission line."

Historical Background

By late winter 1933, the nation had already endured more than three years of economic depression. Statistics revealing the depth of the Great Depression were staggering. More than 11,000 of 24,000 banks had failed, destroying the savings of depositors. Millions of people were out of work and seeking jobs; additional millions were working at jobs that barely provided subsistence. Currency values dropped as the deflationary spiral continued to tighten and farm markets continued to erode.

During the previous summer the Democratic Party had unveiled a generalized plan for economic recovery in its platform. They called their platform a "contract" and set forth in it a series of provisions to remedy the economic disaster. Although frequently lacking specifics, the platform addressed a wide range of issues: among them were agricultural relief, Prohibition, unemployment, and old age insurance. While not followed very closely by Franklin Roosevelt's administration, the platform did indicate that election of the Democratic candidate would result in unprecedented governmental growth to deal with the problems pressing on the nation. Roosevelt set about to prepare the nation to accept expansion of federal power. Roosevelt recognized that the programs he was about to introduce for congressional legislative action to relieve the dire effects of the Great Depression were unprecedented in peacetime.

In his 1933 inaugural address Roosevelt stated: "Our Constitution is so simple and practical that it is possible always to meet extraordinary needs by changes in emphasis and arrangement without loss of essential form. That is why our constitutional system has proved itself the most superbly enduring political mechanism the modern world has produced. It has met every stress of vast expansion of territory, of foreign wars, of bitter internal strife, of world relations." Yet, at the same time, he was prepared to recommend measures that he knew could succeed only with strong public pressure in support of extraordinary federal powers to deal with "extraordinary needs."

The first document featured with this article is the speech given on Inauguration Day in March 1933. It is particularly memorable for its attack on the psychology of the Great Depression. Less memorable but more enduring is the justification that Roosevelt planned to use to expand the power of the federal government to achieve his legislative objectives and thereby ease the effects of the Great Depression. Woven throughout his inaugural address was his plan. He aimed to declare war on the Great Depression and needed all the executive latitude possible in order to wage that war. For in addition to his famous statement "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself," he also said "I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis -- broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe."

Resources

Graham, Otis L., Jr. *An Encore for Reform: The Old Progressives and the New Deal.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Leuchtenburg, William. *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940.* New York: Harper and Row, 1963.

Teaching Activities

Vocabulary

1. Direct the students to define the following words before reading the Inaugural Address: induction, candor, curtailment, languishes, incompetence, abdicated, exhortations, callous, ethics, endeavor, foreclosure, manifestation.

Document Analysis

2. Provide students with a copy of the inaugural address (Document 1). Ask them to read it and underline any words that reflect a metaphor for war. For example, on page 1 the words "convert retreat into advance" would be appropriate. Direct student pairs to compare and discuss their findings.

Group Research

3. Ask students to list components of President Roosevelt's plan to attack the Great Depression as stated in his inaugural address. Copy these components onto a sheet of butcher paper and post in the classroom. Next, provide students with a list of New Deal programs. Use examples from the documents cited in this lesson (the CCC, the WPA, the FERA, and the TVA) and add others that you deem appropriate. Assign small groups of students to research one of the programs to determine whether it addressed one of the issues specified in the speech and included on the posted list. Finally, direct the groups to report their findings and discuss whether their program had any connection to the military metaphor used within the speech.

Group Document Analysis

4. Divide students into six groups and distribute one of the six photographs (without its caption) and a Photograph Analysis Worksheet to each group. Instruct the students to complete the worksheet based on their assigned photograph. Ask a representative from each group to describe the group's photo to the class. Ask students to determine which New Deal program is depicted in each of the images based on the research they conducted in Activity 3. Read the captions to the students to inform them of the actual programs depicted in the photos.

Essay

5. Ask students to write an essay in which they analyze the war powers clauses included in the Constitution and compare them to the tone of the speech and the development of the New Deal programs.

Internet Research

6. Using the Web-based sources listed below, direct the students to access and retrieve other New Deal images and documents. The students should search for images of their local area, state, or region and record and then discuss the variety of New Deal programs that they find represented in the images and prepare a brief report on the programs they find. Permit the students to report their findings orally to the entire class or in small discussion groups.

From the National Archives and Records Administration:

A New Deal for the Arts
http://www.nara.gov/exhall/newdeal/newdeal.html

Tokens and Treasures
Franklin D. Roosevelt, Democrat, 32d President, 1933-45
http://www.nara.gov/exhall/treasures/fdr.html

NARA Digital Classroom. Constitutional Issues: Separation of Powers
http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/conissues/separat.html

NAIL (National Archives Information Locator)
http://www.nara.gov/nara/nail.html

FDR Library
http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/

From Other Government Agencies:

The Whitehouse: Presidents: Franklin D. Roosevelt
http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/glimpse/presidents/html/fr32.html

Social Security Administration History
http://www.ssa.gov/history/history.html

The Library of Congress, American Memory.
The New Deal Stage.
Selection from the Federal Theatre Project, 1935-1939
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fedtp/fthome.html

From Non-Government Organizations:

New Deal Network
http://newdeal.feri.org/

The American Experience: Surviving the Dustbowl
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/amex/dustbowl/

The American Experience: The Presidents
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/amex/presidents/frames/featured/featured.html

FDR Cartoon Library
http://www.wizvax.net/nisk_hs/fdr/index.html

Class Discussion

7. Facilitate a class discussion about other areas of domestic policy that apply the warfare metaphor. Two examples are the war on drugs and the war on poverty.

The photograph above (control number NLR-PHOCO-74201010) is of WPA Federal Theater Project figures silhouetted against the backdrop of the Constitution, c. 1935. It is from the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

The documents included in this project are from the Franklin Roosevelt Library; Record Group 142, Records of the Tennessee Valley Authority; and Record Group 69, Records of the Works Progress Administration. They are available online through the National Archives Information Locator (NAIL) <http://www.nara.gov/nara/nail.html> database, control numbers NLR-PPF-1820-1STCARBON-RS1, NWDNS-142-H-158, NLR-PHOCO-53227(322), NWDNS-69-N-22420D, NLR-PHOCO-83116(2), NLR-PHOCO-53227(291), and NLR-PHOCO-53227(1673). NAIL is a searchable database that contains information about a wide variety of NARA holdings across the country. You can use NAIL to search record descriptions by keywords or topics and retrieve digital copies

of selected textual documents, photographs, maps, and sound recordings related to thousands of topics.

This article was written by John M. Lawlor, Jr., a professor at Reading Area Community College in Reading, PA.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
Washington, D. C.
March 4, 1933

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

In such a spirit on my part and on yours we face our common difficulties. They concern, thank God, only material things. Values have shrunken to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds

Document 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, page 1

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is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone.

More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.

Yet our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. Compared with the perils which our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for. Nature still offers her bounty and human efforts have multiplied it. Plenty is at our doorstep, but a generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily this is because rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods have failed, through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure, and abdicated. Practices of the unscrupulous money changers stand indicted in the court of public opinion, rejected by the hearts and minds of men.

True they have tried, but their efforts have been

Document 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, page 2

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cost in the pattern of an outworn tradition. Faced by failure of credit they have proposed only the lending of more money. Stripped of the lure of profit by which to induce our people to follow their false leadership, they have resorted to exhortations, pleading tearfully for restored confidence. They know only the rules of a generation of self-seekers. They have no vision, and when there is no vision the people perish.

The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths. The measure of the restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit.

Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort. The joy and moral stimulation of work no longer must be forgotten in the mad chase of evanescent profits. These dark days will be worth all they cost us if they teach us that our true destiny is not to be ministered unto but to minister to ourselves and to our fellow men.

Recognition of the falsity of material wealth as the standard of success goes hand in hand with the abandonment of the false belief that public office and high political position

Document 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, page 3

are to be valued only by the standards of pride of place and personal profit; and there must be an end to a conduct in banking and in business which too often has given to a sacred trust the likeness of callous and selfish wrongdoing. Small wonder that confidence languishes, for it thrives only on honesty, on honor, on the sacredness of obligations, on faithful protection, on unselfish performance; without them it cannot live.

Restoration calls, however, not for changes in ethics alone. This Nation asks for action, and action now.

Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. It can be accomplished in part by direct recruiting by the Government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of a war, but at the same time, through this employment, accomplishing greatly needed projects to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources.

Hand in hand with this we must frankly recognize the overbalance of population in our industrial centers and, by engaging on a national scale in a redistribution, endeavor to provide a better use of the land for those best fitted for the land. The task can be helped by definite efforts to raise the values of agricultural products and with this the power to purchase the output of our cities. It can be helped by

Document 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, page 4

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preventing realistically the tragedy of the growing loss through foreclosure of our small homes and our farms. It can be helped by insistence that the Federal, State, and local governments act forthwith on the demand that their cost be drastically reduced. It can be helped by the unifying of relief activities which today are often scattered, uneconomical, and unequal. It can be helped by national planning for and supervision of all forms of transportation and of communications and other utilities which have a definitely public character. There are many ways in which it can be helped, but it can never be helped merely by talking about it. We must act and act quickly.

Finally, in our progress toward a resumption of work we require two safeguards against a return of the evils of the old order; there must be a strict supervision of all banking and credits and investments; there must be an end to speculation with other people's money, and there must be provision for an adequate but sound currency.

These are the lines of attack. I shall presently urge upon a new Congress, in special session, detailed measures for their fulfillment, and I shall seek the immediate assistance of the several States.

Through this program of action we address ourselves

Document 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, page 5

to putting our own national house in order and making income balance outgo. Our international trade relations, though vastly important, are in point of time and necessity secondary to the establishment of a sound national economy. I favor as a practical policy the putting of first things first. I shall spare no effort to restore world trade by international economic readjustment, but the emergency at home cannot wait on that accomplishment.

The basic thought that guides these specific means of national recovery is not narrowly nationalistic. It is the insistence, as a first consideration, upon the interdependence of the various elements in and parts of the United States -- a recognition of the old and permanently important manifestation of the American spirit of the pioneer. It is the way to recovery. It is the immediate way. It is the strongest assurance that the recovery will endure.

In the field of world policy I would dedicate this Nation to the policy of the good neighbor -- the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others -- the neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbors.

If I read the temper of our people correctly, we now

Document 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, page 6

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realize as we have never realized before our interdependence on each other; that we cannot merely take but we must give as well; that if we are to go forward, we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of a common discipline, because without such discipline no progress is made, no leadership becomes effective. We are, I know, ready and willing to submit our lives and property to such discipline, because it makes possible a leadership which aims at a larger good. This I propose to offer, pledging that the larger purposes will bind upon us all as a sacred obligation with a unity of duty hitherto evoked only in time of armed strife.

With this pledge taken, I assume unhesitatingly the leadership of this great army of our people dedicated to a disciplined attack upon our common problems.

Action in this image and to this end is feasible under the form of government which we have inherited from our ancestors. Our Constitution is so simple and practical that it is possible always to meet extraordinary needs by changes in emphasis and arrangement without loss of essential form. That is why our constitutional system has proved itself the most superbly enduring political mechanism the modern world has produced. It has met every stress of vast expansion of

Document 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, page 7

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territory, of foreign ward, of bitter internal strife, of world relations.

It is to be hoped that the normal balance of executive and legislative authority may be wholly adequate to meet the unprecedented task before us. But it may be that an unprecedented demand and need for undelayed action may call for temporary departure from that normal balance of public procedure.

I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world may require. These measures, or such other measures as the Congress may build out of its experience and wisdom, I shall seek, within my constitutional authority, to bring to speedy adoption.

But in the event that the Congress shall fail to take one of these two courses, and in the event that the national emergency is still critical, I shall not evade the clear course of duty that will then confront me. I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis — broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.

For the trust reposed in me I will return the courage and the devotion that befit the time. I can do no less.

Document 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, page 8

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We face the arduous days that lie before us in the warm courage of national unity; with the clear consciousness of seeking old and precious moral values; with the clean satisfaction that comes from the stern performance of duty by old and young alike. We aim at the accurance of a rounded and permanent national life.

We do not distrust the future of essential democracy. The people of the United States have not failed. In their need they have registered a mandate that they want direct, vigorous action. They have asked for discipline and direction under leadership. They have made me the present instrument of their wishes. In the spirit of the gift I take it.

In this dedication of a Nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May He protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come.

Document 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, page 9

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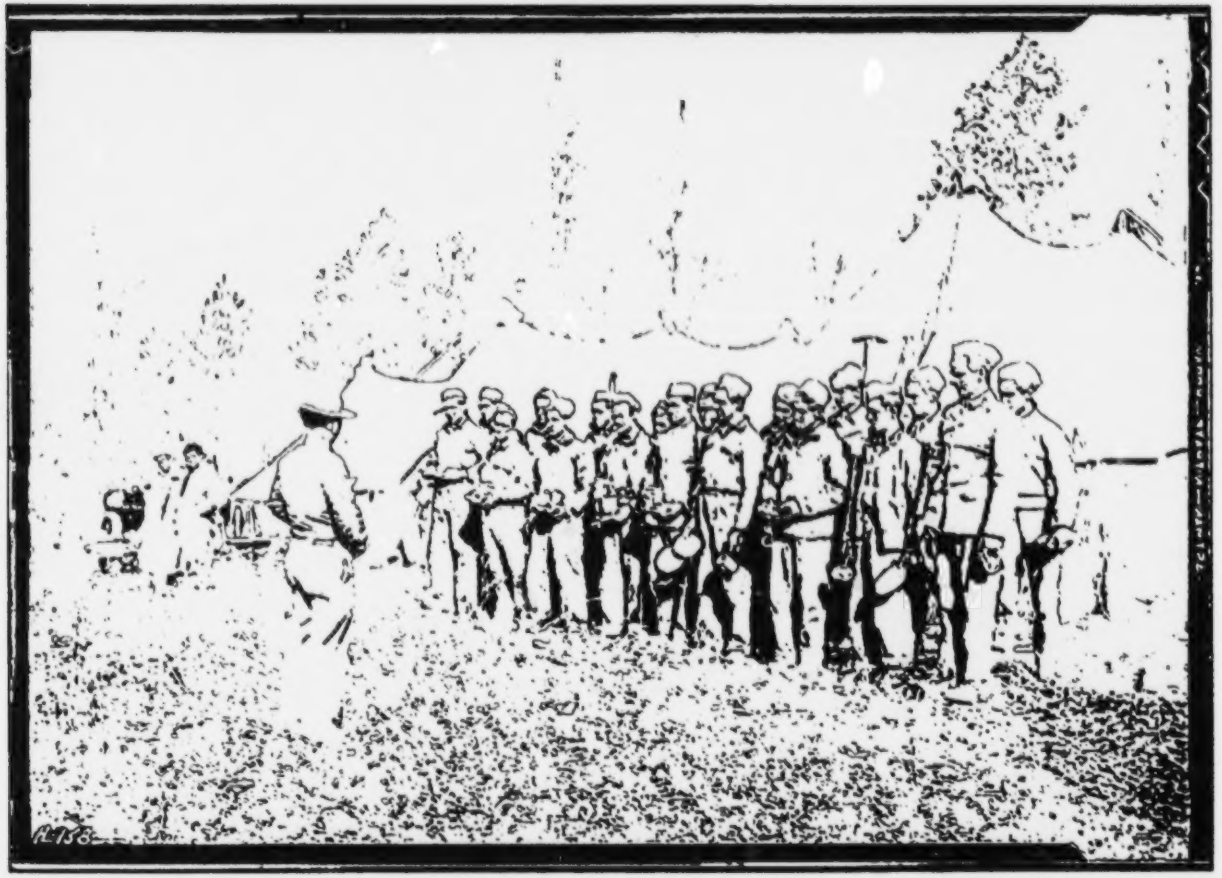

Document 2: **"Sgt. Burke, of the U.S. Army, talking to a group of boys just arrived from New York as replacements for CCC Camp, TVA #22, near Esco, Tennessee, telling them the rules of the camp before they go to their lunch. Behind the boys are some of the tents in which they are living, pending the completion of the barracks which will be their winter quarters. The iron cones behind the two boys at the left of the picture are heating stoves for the tents."**

Document 3: "CCC Boys at work," Prince George County, Virginia.

Document 4: **Works Progress Administration (WPA) sewing shop at 475 Tenth Avenue, New York City.**

Document 5: Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) camps for unemployed women in Arcola, Pennsylvania "Reunion Day First Campers Join Second Campers."

Document 6: Farm Security Administration-Works Progress Administration: Unemployed men eating in Volunteers of America soup kitchen in Washington, D.C.

Document 7: Rural Electrification Administration (REA) - Tennessee Valley Administration (TVA): "Stringing rural TVA transmission line."

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Photograph Analysis Worksheet

Step 1. Observation
A. Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

PEOPLE	OBJECTS	ACTIVITIES

Step 2. Inference
Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

_____
_____
_____

Step 3. Questions
A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

_____
_____

B. Where could you find answers to them?

_____
_____

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